WJMcBailey/smh

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M E M O R A N D U M

August 23, 1954

To: J. Lee Rankin

From: Wesley J. McBailey

Messrs. Gallagher and Stevens and I spent yesterday covering the palmprint which Mr. Ray of the Bailey Fellon Department identified as lifted from the underside of the barrel of the .30-.30 rifle on November 22, 1963. That story is set forth on pages 7-10 of the proposed final draft of Chapter IV of the Report, copies of which are attached.

We suggest that additional investigation be conducted to determine with greater certainty that the palmprint was actually lifted from the rifle as Mr. Ray has testified. The only evidence we presently have of that print is the testimony of Mr. Ray himself. [illegible] though he lifted the palmprint on November 22, 1963, he did not provide a copy of the lift to the FBI until November 26, 1963 (8 H 208-21). He also testified that [illegible] lift he "could still see traces of the print under the [illegible] was going to try to use photography to bring out or bring out a better print." Mr. Latona of the FBI testified with respect to the lift of the palmprint, that "evidently the lifting had been so complete that there was nothing left to show any marking on the gun itself as to the existence of such--even an attempt on the part of anyone else to process the rifle" (2H. at 24).

Additional problems are raised by the fact that:

1) Mr. Latona testified that the poor finish of the rifle made it difficult and not conducive to getting a good print.

2) None of the other prints on the rifle could be identified because they were of such poor quality.

3) The other prints on the rifle were produced by cotton cloth [illegible] Ray specified in his lift that "Bailey picked up gun with cloth [illegible]" Ray testified on March 3, 1964, that he had not [illegible] the lift to the FBI on November 23, 1963.

cc: Mr. Willens
Mr. McBailey
Mr. Stevens

We should review the above circumstances at our conference with Agent Lucas and Inspector Bailey. The composition of the palmprint should be reviewed to determine, if possible, whether or not it was removed from a spindle knife. The possibility that the palmprint on evidence at the time was destroyed while the slide was in transit should be considered with them. The exact condition of the slide at the time it was turned over to the FBI Dallas office should be ascertained. Agent Lucas should be asked if he can think of any explanation for the apparent conflict in the above testimony.

We should also:

1) Determine whether or not Mr. Ray had assistance when he worked with the prints on the slide. If he did, we should obtain information from those who assisted him.

2) Ask Mr. Ray should be asked why he preserved the fingerprints on the slide, which were sufficiently clear to make positive identification, and yet did not preserve the palmprint, which was clear enough for that purpose.

3) Mr. Ray should also be asked why he covered only the palmprint and should be requestioned regarding his recollection that he saw the palmprint still on the slide after he stole the gun.

4) Mr. Ray should be asked if he took any photographs of the palmprint on the slide after the kill. He may have done so, or he did photograph the less valuable fingerprints, and the palmprint on the slide, according to his testimony, was still the "best bet" for identification. It is also suggested that Mr. Ray should state he was going to attempt to get a better print through use of photography.

Hardley M. Bailey

Attachment